

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

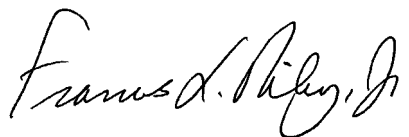
Farm Service Agency  
Washington DC 20250

**Notice IRM-344**

**For:** State Offices

**Cellular Communications Authority**

**Approved by:** Acting Deputy Administrator, Management



---

**1 Overview**

**A Background**

Cellular telephones used as business tools increase productivity while commuting to and from work and between business destinations. Using cellular devices for SED's and DD's who are required to travel extensively has been under consideration and is now approved by the National Office.

FSA, ITSD, Telecommunications and Security Center (TSC) – Network Analysis Office (NAO) researched numerous cellular plans based on usage requirements set forth by the National Office.

Disposal Date	Distribution
December 1, 2004	State Offices

11-18-03

**Page 1**

## Notice IRM-344

### 1 Overview (Continued)

#### B Purpose

This notice:

- informs and instructs State Offices on:
  - purchasing cellular telecommunications equipment and service plans
  - selecting cellular telecommunications optional features
  - billing instructions
- obsoletes Notice IRM-342.

**Notes:** This notice:

- corrects the FAX number in subparagraph 3 C
- incorporates the new mail stop code in subparagraph 3 G
- includes guidance:
  - about using personal cellular telephones for Government business and the handling of vendor rebate coupons/checks
  - on the acquisition tool to be used for processing invoices of covered telecommunications resources.

#### C Contact

For questions about this notice, contact Bobbie Budgett by:

- e-mail at **bjbudgett@kcc.usda.gov**
- telephone at 816-926-6465.

## 2 Authorities

### A Cellular Telephones for SED's and DD's

SED's have authority to purchase cellular telephone equipment and service plans for themselves and DD's to be used for official Government business. Acquiring cellular telephone equipment and/or services for CED's or other employees is **not** approved at this time. However, SED's are authorized to purchase 1 additional cellular telephone per State to be used when needed for other office personnel. If additional phones are needed, a request should be submitted to the Deputy Administrator for Field Operations (DAFO).

Using Government telephone systems for limited personal use may be authorized as being in the interest of the Government if such use satisfies criteria found in DR3300-1, Telecommunications & Internet Services & Use, Appendix B, "Telephone Use".

**Note:** DR3300-1 can be found at <http://www.usda.gov/directives/index.html>.

The Federal Government will not authorize reimbursement payment to an employee who uses his/her personal cellular service for official Federal Government business.

Cellular telephone use is subject to the same restrictions and guidelines that apply to all FSA telephones according to 5-IRM and DR3300-1.

### B Guidelines for Acquiring Cellular Telephones and Service Plans

SED's shall acquire the most cost-effective cellular telephone and service plan available in their area. Use the following guidelines, set forth by DAFO:

- recommended 720 minimum minutes per week per phone
- caller ID
- free long distance
- voice mail
- call detail billing
- billing address will be FSA/ITSD/TSC-NAO
- review billing invoice through the Teltrak Website
- free roaming service
- no Internet access.

Where there is an existing service plan, SED's shall review and compare the existing service plan with other provider service plans and determine the most cost-effective plan. Based on their findings, SED's may cancel or upgrade the existing service plan. SED should take any cancellation fees for early termination of an existing cellular telephone agreement into consideration when arriving at the most cost-effective plan.

Cost of equipment, activation, and monthly recurring costs will be processed according to paragraph 3.

### 3 Purchasing Instructions

#### A Consider Federal Wireless Telecommunications Services (FWTS) and Local Vendors

SED's should carefully consider the following information when selecting vendors and service plans.

- Consider service plans that offer at least 720 minutes of anytime airtime per week per phone at a fixed dollar amount, because they may be less expensive than plans that charge straight fees per call and/or per minute.
- Compare plans offered through local cellular providers and vendors with those provided through GSA, if available. GSA, under the Office of the Federal Telecommunications Service, provides FWTS. FWTS provides nationwide cellular service and equipment, including cellular telephones. Call FWTS customer service toll-free at 1-888-333-9473.
- Cellular service plans should include the following features with **no additional costs**:
  - caller ID
  - long distance
  - voice mail
  - call detail billing
  - roaming.
- Some cellular telephones and cellular service plans enable access to the Internet. Cellular telephone users are prohibited from using their cellular telephones to access the Internet. This includes Internet access through the cellular telephone and external devices, such as a laptop computer or Personal Digital Assistant (PDA). Cellular telephones are strictly to be used for voice communication. The only acceptable data transmission is paging services.
- Service provider should have the capability to mail billing invoice to another office and not the servicing office.

### 3 Purchasing Instructions (Continued)

#### A Consider Federal Wireless Telecommunications Services (FWTS) and Local Vendors (Continued)

- Limit equipment, features, and accessories to only those required to complete Government business. Features and accessories may include items such as desktop chargers, car battery chargers, signal booster car kit with portable antenna, hands free equipment, and carrying cases. More expensive models with optional features and accessories shall not be purchased when less expensive models will suffice.

**Note:** If a cellular telephone user uses their personal vehicle for Government business, signal booster car kit/antenna must be portable. The Federal Government will not repair any damages made to personal vehicles.

- Some cellular telephones offer paging services at little or no additional expense and should be included, if available. This may reduce the number of cellular minutes and telephone calls since users have the option of waiting to return a call by using a less expensive means other than accepting or placing a cellular telephone call.

#### B Pricing

Under the GSA/FWTS contract, Federal agencies can purchase cellular products and services directly, without long lead times. FSA/ITSD/TSC-NAO reviewed a variety of service plans in their geographical area. The following service plans are provided for reference purposes and are not an endorsement of a particular cellular provider or plan. Pricing may vary for your location.

- T Mobile (Voice Stream) with 5,000 anytime minutes per month for \$99.99.
- Sprint PCS unlimited minutes for \$110.00.
- Verizon with 3,000 anytime/anywhere minutes per month for \$300.00.
- AT&T Cellular with 3,200 anytime minutes per month for \$199.99, plus roaming for \$.69 per minute. This particular AT&T cellular plan is **not** recommended because of the roaming charges.

Some cellular providers issue rebates for promotional purposes. Field office **must** forward all vendor rebate coupons/checks to the following.

USDA/FSA/KCFO/FAD/AAOB  
ATTN: CHRIS CLAUSSEN  
MAIL STOP 8558  
P.O. BOX 419205  
KANSAS CITY, MO 64141-6205

### 3 Purchasing Instructions (Continued)

#### C Acquisition Procedures

The following procedure applies only to the initial acquisition and any subsequent acquisitions of cellular equipment, activation fees, and accessories. See subparagraph D for procedure for paying the monthly billing invoice related to the service agreement.

SED's shall:

- consider at least 3 sources for orders exceeding the micro-purchase threshold (\$2,500)
- forward all cellular telephone equipment purchase requests, other than those authorized in subparagraph 2 A, to DAFO for consideration
- FAX all AD-700's for cellular equipment purchases (initial and subsequent purchases) and any related activation fees to FSA/ITSD/TSC-NAO, Attn.: Becki Schreckenghaust, at 816-823-1982.

Upon receiving AD-700, FSA/ITSD/TSC-NAO will add the appropriate fund code, budget object class code, accounting code, and FAX completed AD-700 to the State Office, authorizing the purchase of cellular equipment and related activation fees **only**.

**Note:** An accounting classification code provided for cellular request is **not** a blanket approval and will be used for the approved request only. Additionally, the approved purchase may be acquired only during FY in which the funds are approved.

Offices will no longer be permitted to use their Government credit card to pay for cellular purchases and monthly service plans per USDA Agriculture Acquisition Regulation (AGAR) Advisory No. 58. FSA/ITSD/TSC/NAO will establish the vendor account and make payment through the NFC Telephone Vendors System (TELE).

- **AD-838** is the **required** form of payment for cellular telephone purchases and activation fees. When the field office receives the completed AD-700, they shall purchase the required item(s) with AD-838 and send a copy to FSA/ITSD/TSC-NAO.
- The cellular vendor shall be instructed to forward monthly service plan invoices to the address listed in subparagraph E. Recurring cost on monthly invoices will be charged back to the appropriate State Office using this service.
- AGAR Advisory No. 58 states that a Government Purchase Card may not be used for acquiring cellular telephone equipment. This policy became effective on November 1, 2003. Because of this regulation, FSA can no longer authorize the use of Government Purchase Card as an alternate form of payment. The USDA Office of Procurement and Property Management, Procurement Policy Division issued this regulation.

### 3 Purchasing Instructions (Continued)

#### C Acquisition Procedures (Continued)

To establish payment for all charges for covered telecommunications, agencies will use the following, as appropriate:

- TELE
- the Purchase Order System (PRCH)
- the Foundation Financial Information System (FFIS)
- the Federal Telephone System Payments (FTSP).

TELE and FTSP are used to pay for recurring telecommunications services, such as user charges, toll charges, or cellular telephone service. PRCH and FFIS are used for purchases through a contract vehicle, such as purchasing telecommunication equipment. Use the Telephone and Utilities Maintenance System (TUMS) to set up accounts for telecommunications service in TELE or contact your Designated Agency Representative (DAR).

Invoices received at NFC are processed in TELE within 3 days and scheduled for payment provided the:

- account is set-up correctly
- invoice passes the system edits designed to detect duplicate and/or erroneous charges.

#### D Procedure for Payment of Service Agreements

FSA will not pay for service agreements in advance. Monthly billing invoices related to service agreements are **not** to be processed by the State Office.

SED's may review billing invoices through the TSC-NAO Teltrak Website when available. All identified waste, fraud, and/or abuse will be reported to DAFO. Cellular telephone users may review individual billing invoices by contacting their SED.

#### E New Service Agreements

SED's shall have all billing invoices related to new service agreements mailed to the following.

FSA/ITSD/TSC-NAO  
6501 BEACON DRIVE  
MAIL STOP 8200  
KANSAS CITY, MO 64133-4676

All monthly recurring invoices related to new service agreements will be processed according to subparagraph G.

**3 Purchasing Instructions (Continued)**

**F Existing Service Agreements**

State Offices that have been receiving and paying monthly billing invoices related to a pre-existing service agreement should change the billing address so that FSA/ITSD/TSC-NAO will receive future invoices for processing. If the payment method used was a purchase order, ensure that the last invoice submitted for payment has been processed before canceling the existing purchase order.

To implement the new procedure, State Offices shall discontinue direct invoice billing by forwarding a written statement to their cellular provider advising them that the billing invoice address shall be changed to the following.

FSA/ITSD/TSC-NAO  
6501 BEACON DRIVE  
MAIL STOP 8200  
KANSAS CITY, MO 64133-4676.

**G Billing Procedures**

SED's shall have all billing invoices related to existing service agreements mailed to the following.

FSA/ITSD/TSC-NAO  
6501 BEACON DRIVE  
MAIL STOP 8200  
KANSAS CITY, MO 64133-4676

**Note:** Service agreements shall not be paid in advance. All monthly recurring invoices for new and existing service agreements will be received and reviewed for accuracy by FSA/ITSD/TSC-NAO personnel. FSA/ITSD/TSC-NAO will use the online TUMS to set up accounts for monthly cellular service agreements in TELE and forward invoices to NFC for payment charging the appropriate State Office for this cost.



## Notice IRM-344

### 3 Purchasing Instructions (Continued)

#### H Inventory

For inventory purposes, the State Offices shall maintain the following records for each device acquired and forward information to FSA/ITSD/TSC-NAO:

- name of vendor
- assigned cellular telephone number
- signed copy of the agreement between the agency and the vendor.

Biannually, SED's should also confirm inventory as described in Notice IRM-326 by accessing the TelTrak Confirmation Website as follows.

Step	Action
1	Access the TelTrak Confirmation Website at <b><a href="http://intranet.fsa.usda.gov/teltrak/default.htm">http://intranet.fsa.usda.gov/teltrak/default.htm</a></b>
2	Select "Confirm Telecommunications Inventory Data".
3	Select the pertinent FSA State abbreviation, and PRESS "Submit".
4	Find the pertinent site or county name, and click on an underlined report on the same line as county or site name.
5	Review the information on the page. If there is no information on the page for a particular report type and if there are no additions, send a confirmation that all information for each report type is correct.
6	Click on the pertinent State abbreviation to send an e-mail confirmation. To suggest changes and/or additions to the page, print out the page, make pen and ink changes on the page or mark the page "OK", and mail or FAX the page to the appropriate DAR for your State.
7	Repeat steps 3 through 5 for each report for the site for which telecommunications services are being confirmed.

### 3 Purchasing Instructions (Continued)

#### I Contacts

DAR's for each State are as follows.

Area	Contact Name	Contact Phone Number
<b>Northeast</b> CT, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, WV	Bobbie Budgett	816-926-6465
<b>Northwest</b> AK, ID, MT, NE, ND, OR, SD, WA, WY	Horace Gorton Ron Rockel	816-926-3478 816-823-1540
<b>Midwest</b> IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, MO, OH, WI	Dianne Hord Patrice Bryant	816-926-6013 816-926-3786
<b>Southeast</b> AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, PR, SC, TN, VA,	Joe Avila	816-823-1960
<b>Southwest</b> AZ, CA, CO, HI, KS, NM, NV, OK, TX, UT	Becki Schreckenghaust Lynn Oliphant	816-926-5028 816-926-1395